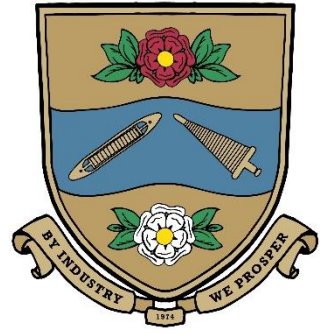


TODMORDEN TOWN COUNCIL

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3rd August 2021

Dear [REDACTED],

Planning Conditions Hollins Mill, Walsden, OL14 6SA

I am writing to you, as Head of the Planning Department, for your assistance with the issues below at the Hollins Mill site. A separate report (Appendix 1) is attached, which details the building work, planning applications and planning conditions relevant to this letter.

Todmorden Town Council is very concerned that listed heritage properties in Todmorden are not being protected and the impact of this on the fabric, look and character of the Town.

Our emerging Neighbourhood Plan will include a list of buildings of local heritage interest that we wish to see receives further consideration as part of the planning process. Given our wish to include these in our Neighbourhood Plan there is an underlying expectation that our already listed buildings are being afforded the proper protection afforded by view of their listed status.

Whilst it is understood that there are many competing demands for resources at Calderdale Council, which have been exacerbated by the Covid-19 pandemic, it is very worrying that such immense damage to our heritage buildings is being condoned.

Turning to Hollins Mill specifically, it is situated on a prominent position on one of the three main roads into Todmorden. The four-storey spinning mill is owned by Mr and Mrs O'Brien and the adjacent weaving shed site by VPower.

The owners of the weaving shed and the two-storey building (last used as an antique shop) at the opposite side of the site applied for planning permission from Calderdale MBC Planning Department. Building work took place at the end of 2019/ early 2020 to the old weaving shed.

Having sympathetically restored and renovated the spinning mill part of the Hollins complex, the owner has come to Todmorden Town Council in some distress to report that the owners of the weaving shed have completely ignored the requirements of the planning department for the sympathetic renovation of a Grade 2 listed building.

The weaving shed has been reduced to a rubble filled wasteland. Most of the roof and any internal supports have been removed except for a small triangle of the building which contains the access to the culvert of Walsden Water.

A crude iron double gate now provides access to the site from the car park in front of the spinning mill and a view of the devastation contrasts badly with the sympathetically renovated spinning mill, not aided also by large steel containers that have now been delivered to site.

Members of Todmorden Town Council were disappointed at the time when permission was given for the weaving shed to be partially demolished, especially in view of the strong objections raised by the Heritage Officer that the Hollins Mill site is of great national importance.

This concern and disappointment have been further deepened because it seems that Calderdale Council Planning Department has not monitored and enforced the robust planning conditions it set when it approved the work.

When Mr O'Brien raised these issues with you, I understand that you advised him that the site is not a priority and that no further action will be taken. This not only appears to ignore the stringent planning conditions set by your team to protect this Grade 2 site but also obviates the obligations of Calderdale Council to protect listed buildings and sites and to enforce planning conditions applied. In our opinion, this gives a clear and worrying message to all that any planning conditions applied to permissions can be completely ignored.

We are also concerned that the needs of residents at Hollins Mill, Winterbutlee Rd and nearby streets have not been taken seriously.

We attach a report that lists the history of planning on the site. When planning was granted for both sites stringent conditions were applied as the majority of the site is grade 2 listed, with the protections that these offer to a site of historic importance.

Todmorden Town Council has received reports that the planning conditions have all but been completely ignored for both the weaving shed and the two-storey building opposite. Also, building work has gone ahead using concrete blocks on the old weaving shed rather than the recycling of the traditional materials from the site. Of the remaining Grade 2 listed building, the triangle shaped building at the junction of Hollins Road and Rochdale road, has had one of its three walls completely replaced with the large Lego concrete blocks.

The roof of the building has many holes that have been patched with temporary coverings and the whole site looks dilapidated and uncared for.

Concern has also been expressed that the height of the wall and the use of heavy machinery on the site is **potentially compromising/will compromise the culvert under the site.**

It is also not clear exactly what purpose the old weaving shed site is currently being used for, with at various points it seems that it is being used as a breaking yard with broken cars littered about.

Apart from the noise, a generator is used throughout the day and sometimes later including weekends and Bank Holidays, causing significant noise and air pollution (smoke and fumes), which adversely affects the flats at Hollins Mill behind the site.

It is not clear what other activities take place at the site or whether a change of use has been agreed for what is in effect a breaking yard in a residential area with access problems for the essential maintenance of the Mill and the flats.

Pigeons are also a problem at the old weaving shed site as they breed in the blocked gutters of the remaining building and potentially is a health and safety hazard for the residents at Hollins Mill.

A further issue is the surface water drainage from the Hollins Mill site which exacerbated the flooding problems in February 2020. Surface water flooding from the site has worsened as the planning conditions attached to the weaving shed and the two-storey building opposite have not been implemented.

Planning permission was turned down for the two-storey building at the other site of the site to be used as a dog day care centre, opposite the breaking yard. Prior to the application for the dog day care centre considerable work was done to the interior of the building to prepare it for the dog day care centre.

It seems that planning permission was previously given for a first-floor apartment and storage but during 2019 the premises were used as an antique shop.

We have been advised that the premises are currently used for at least one eBay company and several deliveries and collection take place each day from what, must now internally be a dangerous property.

First floor windows of this grade 2 listed property are uVPC and these were installed some years ago. As several planning applications have been received for this building and presumably visits made by planning officers, no planning enforcement notice has been issued during this time concerning this contravention of conditions for listed buildings. The exterior of the building is in a poor state, with downpipes being in a state of disrepair, potentially damaging the fabric of the building.

For many years Todmorden, like many of the small Pennine mill towns, has been regarded as a brownfield site ripe for development with no concept of the integrity of the town and its industrial architecture.

The lack of interest and the fate of the weaving shed at Hollins Mill is the latest example. The town of Todmorden has an urban integrity which should be acknowledged, cherished and adapted with sensitivity for modern use, not crudely destroyed.

The built environment in Todmorden is both interesting and underrated. It has three Grade 1 buildings – Todmorden Town Hall, the Unitarian Church and Dobroyd Castle, twelve grade 2* properties and almost 400 Grade 2 listed buildings including several early railway viaducts.

Todmorden Town Council has been collating a list of properties, which although not currently listed, add to the character and 'roots' of the area as mentioned be included in our emerging Neighbourhood Plan.

The current state of the weaving shed, which occupies a prominent position in Walsden, does not give a good example of respect for the heritage of Todmorden, nor display its best aspects.

The Town Council would ask that:

1. The Planning Department intervenes with VPower to ensure the planning conditions are adhered to and that planning restrictions are reinforced where they still can be
2. Some form of restitution be considered for the parts that cannot be restored
3. Enforcement action is taken in respect of the building which has been used to sell antiques
4. A written assurance is provided to the Town Council that Calderdale MBC will carry out its reinforcement responsibility and not allow developers to ride rough shod over planning conditions, especially those protected by listed status, which in doing so damages the integrity of the whole fabric of the town
5. The Town Council be kept informed of enforcement action to be taken in order that we may keep residents apprised of actions being taken

Yours sincerely,

Colin Hill

**Colin Hill
Town Clerk**